



BOB JONES UNIVERSITY

EST. 1927

April 1, 2016

Ms. Catherine Lhamon, Assistant Secretary  
U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights  
Lyndon Baines Johnson Department of Education Building  
400 Maryland Avenue, SW  
Washington, DC 20202-1100

Re: Request for Religious Exemption from Certain Applications of Title IX

Dear Ms. Lhamon:

I hereby request, under 20 U.S.C. § 1681(a)(3) and 34 C.F.R. § 106.12, that the Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights acknowledge that Bob Jones University is exempt from Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 and its accompanying regulations, to the extent that they are interpreted to curtail the University's freedom to act in accordance with its religious convictions. As president of Bob Jones University, I am the "highest ranking official of the institution," 34 C.F.R. § 106.12(b), and thus qualified to seek these exemptions.

Bob Jones University (BJU) was founded in 1927 as a Christ-centered institution of higher education, emphasizing theology and the arts.<sup>1</sup> BJU is committed, "[w]ithin the cultural and academic soil of liberal arts higher education," to "grow[ing] Christlike character that is scripturally disciplined, others-serving, God-loving, Christ-proclaiming and focused above."<sup>2</sup>

BJU is completely controlled by a religious organization: its Board of Trustees.<sup>3</sup> All board members are like-minded Christians who are required annually to read and indicate consent to the University Creed, which states as follows:

<sup>1</sup> See <http://www.bju.edu/about/history.php>.

<sup>2</sup> See <http://www.bju.edu/about/mission-statement.php>.

<sup>3</sup> Bob Jones University Policy Manual, Vol. I, Bylaws, Article III, Section 1, p.8; Bob Jones University Policy Manual, Volume I, Section 1.5.2.1, p.35.

ELIZABETH HUNTER et al.

v.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, et al.

Case No. 6:21-cv-00474 (AA)

**GOV Ex. 6**

Ms. Catherine Lhamon

Page 2

April 1, 2016

The general nature and object of the corporation shall be to conduct an institution of learning for the general education of youth in the essentials of culture and in the arts and sciences, giving special emphasis to the Christian religion and the ethics revealed in the Holy Scriptures, combating all atheistic, agnostic, pagan, and so-called scientific adulterations of the Gospel, unqualifiedly affirming and teaching the inspiration of the Bible (both the Old and the New Testaments); the creation of man by the direct act of God; the incarnation and virgin birth of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ; His identification as the Son of God; His vicarious atonement for the sins of mankind by the shedding of His blood on the cross; the resurrection of His body from the tomb; His power to save men from sin; the new birth through the regeneration by the Holy Spirit; and the gift of eternal life by the grace of God. This charter shall never be amended, modified, altered or changed as to the provisions hereinbefore set forth.<sup>4</sup>

Board members must also annually read and consent to the mission statement<sup>5</sup>, as well as the general objectives of the University as set forth in the bylaws and charter<sup>6</sup>, and the University's philosophy of education statement<sup>7</sup> (copies of which are enclosed).<sup>8</sup> Every member of the Board is required to indicate that they have read the Board Handbook and Bylaws and are in agreement with them.<sup>9</sup> Board members who can no longer agree to these items disqualify themselves from membership.<sup>10</sup>

Additionally, BJU serves a particular constituency of independent, fundamental churches, and its mission is, in part, to develop individuals who are "engaged in service and leadership in a biblically faithful local church."

Not only does the University rely on and require all members of its governing board to affirm the University Creed, it also requires its faculty to do so as well, since the creed is foundational to all that it does, including what is taught in its classes<sup>11</sup>.

The Board of Trustees and the University submit themselves to the Bible and to these expressions of its doctrine and seek to take positions that are in accord with those standards,

<sup>4</sup> Bob Jones University Policy Manual, Vol. I, Preamble to Charter and Bylaws of Bob Jones University, p. 7.

<sup>5</sup> See <http://www.bju.edu/about/mission-statement.php>.

<sup>6</sup> Bob Jones University Policy Manual, Vol. I, Preamble to Charter and Bylaws of Bob Jones University, p. 7.

<sup>7</sup> Bob Jones University Policy Manual, Vol. I, Section 1.2.3, p. 6.

<sup>8</sup> Bob Jones University Policy Manual, Vol. I, Section 1.4.1.3(1), p.21.

<sup>9</sup> Bob Jones University Policy Manual, Vol. I, Section 1.4.1.2(2), p. 21.

<sup>10</sup> Bob Jones University Policy Manual, Vol. I, 1.4.1.3(2), p.21.

<sup>11</sup> Bob Jones University Policy Manual, Vol. I, Preamble to Charter and Bylaws of Bob Jones University, p. 7; Section, 1.4.1.3, p.21; Bob Jones University Policy Manual, Vol. IV, Section 4.5.2.1.1, p. 28.

Ms. Catherine Lhamon

Page 3

April 1, 2016

including with respect to how BJU's president is chosen and who is scripturally qualified to preach the Scripture. As articulated in its Presidential Profile (enclosed), BJU's Board of Trustees requires that its president possess certain personal traits because the president is not only chief executive of a large and complex educational institution, but also the spiritual leader of a religious community.

Although BJU does not expressly require that its president be male, a "candidate must be an ordained preacher who is an able, evangelistic, biblically qualified, inspirational and biblically sound preacher of the inerrant Word."<sup>12</sup> The same section of the policy manual refers to the passages of Holy Scripture that set forth the criteria for ordained preachers (and thus, indirectly, for the president of BJU).<sup>13</sup> Those passages reveal that ordained preachers must be male.<sup>14</sup> Because BJU's selection criteria for its president are drawn directly from the Bible, and thus are based upon BJU's religious tenets, BJU requests exemption from Title IX and its accompanying regulations to the extent that they are interpreted to reach BJU's selection of its president, and any other positions at BJU for which ordination is a qualification.

BJU does not have any written policies expressing the qualifications of speakers for its conferences or other events; the president selects speakers at his discretion. Regarding those who will preach the Bible at conferences or other events, the president customarily begins with ordained preachers with whom he is familiar, possessing knowledge of their ministries, their orthodoxy, and their degree of agreement with BJU's understanding of Christian doctrine. Speakers who will not preach the Bible need not be ordained. Both men and women have spoken at campus events and conferences. However, it is the University's sincerely held belief that only males may be ordained to the preaching and pastoral ministry.

Because its conference speaker selection criteria are based upon its religious tenets, BJU requests a religious exemption to the extent that Title IX or its accompanying regulations are interpreted to include selection of conference speakers or reach BJU's selection of Bible preachers in any other context.

Specifically, BJU requests, under 20 U.S.C. § 1681(a)(3) and 34 C.F.R. § 106.12, that the Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights acknowledge that BJU is exempt from Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 and the following implementing regulations, to the extent that they are interpreted to curtail the University's freedom to fill positions requiring ordination and select Bible preachers in accordance with its theological commitments:

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<sup>12</sup> Bob Jones University Policy Manual, Vol. I, Section 1.4.1.6, p. 24.

<sup>13</sup> *Id.*

<sup>14</sup> 1 Timothy 3; Titus 1.

Ms. Catherine Lhamon

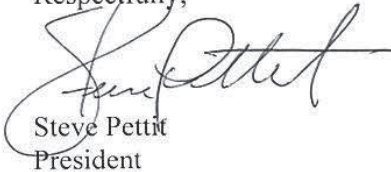
Page 4

April 1, 2016

34 C.F.R. § 106.21 (admission)  
34 C.F.R. § 106.22 (preference in admission)  
34 C.F.R. § 106.23 (recruitment)  
34 C.F.R. § 106.31 (education programs or activities)  
34 C.F.R. § 106.32 (housing)  
34 C.F.R. § 106.33 (comparable facilities)  
34 C.F.R. § 106.34 (access to classes and schools)  
34 C.F.R. § 106.36 (counseling)  
34 C.F.R. § 106.37 (financial assistance)  
34 C.F.R. § 106.38 (employment assistance to students)  
34 C.F.R. § 106.39 (health and insurance benefits and services)  
34 C.F.R. § 106.40 (marital or parental status)  
34 C.F.R. § 106.41 (athletics)  
34 C.F.R. § 106.43 (standards for measuring skill or progress in physical education classes)  
34 C.F.R. § 106.51-61 (relating to employment)

Thank you in advance for your consideration. I look forward to hearing from you soon. If you require anything further, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Respectfully,



Steve Pettit  
President

SP:mam



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

OFFICE FOR CIVIL RIGHTS

June 17, 2016

Steve Pettit  
President  
Bob Jones University  
1700 Wade Hampton Blvd.  
Greenville, SC 29614

Dear President Pettit:

I write to respond to your April 1, 2016, letter to the U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights (OCR), in which you requested a religious exemption for Bob Jones University (University) of Greenville, South Carolina, from Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 (Title IX), 20 U.S.C. § 1681. Title IX prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex in any education program or activity operated by a recipient of Federal financial assistance.

Title IX and its implementing regulation at 34 C.F.R. § 106.12 provide that Title IX does not apply to an educational institution controlled by a religious organization to the extent that application of Title IX would be inconsistent with the controlling organization's religious tenets. Therefore, such educational institutions are allowed to request an exemption from Title IX by identifying the provisions of Title IX that conflict with a specific tenet of the religious organization. The request must identify the religious organization that controls the educational institution and specify the tenets of that organization and the provisions of the law or regulation that conflict with those tenets.

Your request explains that members of the University's Board of Trustees, which "completely control[s]" the University, are "like-minded Christians who are required annually to read and indicate consent to the University Creed." According to your letter, the Creed states that the "general nature and object of" the University is to "conduct an institution of learning... , giving special emphasis to the Christian religion and the ethics revealed in the Holy Scriptures." Your letter goes on to state that "Board members must also annually read and consent to the mission statement, as well as the general objectives of the University as set forth in the bylaws and charter, and the University's philosophy of education statement." You explain that faculty are also required "to affirm the University Creed... since the creed is foundational to all that [the University] does, including what is taught in its classes."

You request an exemption to the extent that Title IX or its implementing regulations "are interpreted to reach [the University's] selection of its president, and any other positions at [the University] for which ordination is a qualification." In support of this request, you explain that the University's Presidential Profile requires that the University president be an ordained preacher. You explain that the Presidential Profile is based on biblical requirements that

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Steve Pettit – page 2

ordained preachers be male.

Your letter also requests a religious exemption from certain provisions of Title IX “to the extent that Title IX or its accompanying regulations are interpreted to include selection of conference speakers or reach [the University]’s selection of Bible preachers in any other context.” You explain that the University “president selects speakers at his discretion” for University conferences or other events and that both “men and women have spoken at campus events and conferences” because “[s]peakers who will not preach the Bible need not be ordained.” However, because “it is the University’s sincerely held belief that only males may be ordained to the preaching and pastoral ministry,” only men are selected as speakers who will “preach the Bible at conferences or other events.” Specifically, “the president customarily begins with ordained preachers with whom he is familiar, possessing knowledge of their ministries, their orthodoxy, and their degree of agreement with [the University’s] understanding of Christian doctrine.”

You state that, for these reasons, the University is requesting an exemption from the following regulatory provisions to the extent they “are interpreted to curtail the University’s freedom to fill positions requiring ordination and select Bible preachers in accordance with theological commitments:”

- 34 C.F.R. § 106.21 (governing admission);
- 34 C.F.R. § 106.22 (governing preference in admission);
- 34 C.F.R. § 106.23 (governing recruitment of students);
- 34 C.F.R. § 106.31 (governing education programs or activities);
- 34 C.F.R. § 106.32 (governing housing);
- 34 C.F.R. § 106.33 (governing comparable facilities such as restrooms and locker rooms);
- 34 C.F.R. § 106.34 (governing access to classes and schools);
- 34 C.F.R. § 106.36 (governing counseling);
- 34 C.F.R. § 106.37 (governing financial assistance);
- 34 C.F.R. § 106.38 (governing employment assistance to students);
- 34 C.F.R. § 106.39 (governing health insurance benefits and services);
- 34 C.F.R. § 106.40 (governing different rules based on marital or parental status of students);
- 34 C.F.R. § 106.41 (governing athletics);
- 34 C.F.R. § 106.43 (governing standards for measuring skill or progress in physical education classes); and
- 34 C.F.R. §§ 106.51-106.61 (governing employment).

The University is exempt from these provisions to the extent that they prohibit discrimination on the basis of sex in the University’s decisions to fill positions requiring ordination and select Bible preachers for University conferences and events, and compliance would conflict with the controlling organization’s religious tenets.

Steve Pettit – page 3

Please note that this letter should not be construed to grant exemption from the requirements of Title IX and the regulation other than as stated above. In the event that OCR receives a complaint against your institution, we are obligated to determine initially whether the allegations fall within the exemption here granted. Also, in the unlikely event that a complainant alleges that the practices followed by the institution are not based on the religious tenets identified in your request, OCR is obligated to identify a controlling organization to contact to verify those tenets. If the organization provides an interpretation of tenets that has a different practical impact than that described by the institution, or if the organization denies that it controls the institution, this exemption will be rescinded.

I hope this letter responds fully to your request. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'C. Lhamon', is positioned above the printed name.

Catherine E. Lhamon  
Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights  
U.S. Department of Education